

## **A Parent's Guide to Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention**

A "how-to" for parents who want to get involved in alcohol and other drug use prevention for children, within their own community

### **HOW THE PARENTS' MOVEMENT BEGAN**

In 1976, a backyard birthday party turned into a backyard marijuana and alcohol party. Stunned by the realization that their 13-year-old daughter and her 12 to 14-year-old friends were drinking and smoking pot, the parents began their own investigation. They invited other parents to a meeting, decided on a set of rules for their teens, and the national parent movement began.

The availability of alcohol and other drugs for our young people is frightening. No parent can assume that their child will never try alcohol or other drugs. What can you, as a concerned parent and community member do?

### **What You Can Do**

1. First, talk with your own child. National Crime Prevention Council's brochure "Talking with Your Kids about Drugs" gives specifics for one on one conversations with your children. This brochure is designed to give you an idea of the larger picture, and what you can do to help. Plenty of other resources exist, and some are listed at the end of this article.
2. You are powerful! Small groups of parents all over the country are banding together, and are finding that their needs and wants are being listened to. Your community may already have a group of concerned parents ready for you to join in preventing alcohol and other drug abuse. If there is no group, start one. The important thing to remember is that as a group, you can accomplish things that would be impossible as a single, concerned parent.
3. Many of the groups that are involved in drug abuse prevention do other things as well. The PTA, Boy and Girl Scouts, schools, community centers, religious groups (particularly the youth programs) and youth groups are all involved in alcohol and other drug abuse prevention. If any of the existing groups in your community are already involved in alcohol and other drug use prevention, join them. If not, recruit them.
4. All 50 states have been mandated by federal law to have alcohol and other drug abuse prevention curricula in the public schools. You can become involved in the process that is used to develop policies and to choose a curriculum. Let your school board representative know what curriculum you favor. The PTA may want to form a study group on the various curricula.
5. As a group, you can make sure there are drug-free alternatives for young people. After-school activities, teen centers, and clean, supervised play space are all things your group can consider. Alcohol and other drug-free prom and graduation nights are special projects our community has successfully undertaken. If you want to work directly with the kids in your community, you can volunteer to be a coach, a scout

leader, or even just offer to supervise, provide transportation, or refreshments. Involve local businesses as sponsors.

6. Your group can solicit businesses to provide after-school and summer jobs.

7. Every community has a variety of service agencies and support groups for both drug and non-drug related problems. Researching and publicizing these groups and agencies is a valuable service.

8. Sponsor parenting workshops - workshops where parents find some of the answers on how to do a better job of helping their kids grow into productive adults.

9. Your group can sponsor mediation and peer counseling training for adults and young people as a way to help alleviate stresses and resolve disputes.

10. Organize the older kids to write and produce skits for the younger ones about staying away from alcohol and other drugs. Having the skills to resist peer pressure is critical. Older kids can really help younger kids with these skills. Most kids love this activity.

### **Parent-Peer Groups**

You can form or join a parent-peer group - a group that forms to provide its members with education (good, accurate information about alcohol and drug use is very important), and to support one another in coping with their children's problems. The group provides supervision for all the children to make sure they are staying away from alcohol and other drugs.

The biggest obstacle to forming a parent-peer group is a lack of awareness. Many parents find it difficult to accept that their child might be involved with alcohol or other drugs. We believe that today, every parent needs to be aware of drugs, and of the possibility that drug use will touch the lives of their children.

If you know or suspect that your child or child's friends are using alcohol or other drugs, then starting a parent-peer group is a particularly effective way to help yourself, your family, and your community.

Parent-peer groups set rules and curfews as a group. These rules and curfews are also enforced by the group. These groups are particularly important in setting and maintaining the standards for alcohol and other drug-free activities, especially parties. The rules are widely known and enforced. This can reduce much of the parent-child arguing over these issues, leaving parents with more time and energy to spend with their children.

## **Resources**

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)  
P.O. Box 2345  
Rockville, MD 20852  
301-468-2600

[www.ncadi.samhsa.gov](http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov)

American Council for Drug Education (ACDE)  
204 Monroe Street  
Rockville, MD 20850  
301-294-0600

[www.acde.org/](http://www.acde.org/)

National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)  
733 15th Street, NW, Suite 540  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-393-7141

[www.ncpc.org/](http://www.ncpc.org/)

DRUGHELP Homepage

<http://www.drughelp.org/>

The National PTA  
700 Rush Street  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312-787-0977

[www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

Note: We have included alcohol as part of children's drug abuse prevention for several reasons. (1) Alcohol is a drug, illegal for anyone who is a minor. (2) Research shows that the use of alcohol frequently precedes the use of marijuana and other drugs, particularly when alcohol use is begun before or during the early teen years. (3) Early drinkers are more likely to become heavy drinkers later.